



City of Freeport

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 25, 2021, 6:30 PM

Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Amanda Green, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilman Mark Martin, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner

Staff Members Present: City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Clerk Malani Robinson, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Planning Director Latilda Hughes- Neel, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Billing Manager Debbie Roberts, Parks Director Travis Digges, Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle, Engineer Alex Rouchaleau

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

The invocation was given by Councilman Farris, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

3. Recognition of Guests

None.

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Revenue & Expenditure Report Through February 2021
- b. Bills
- c. Special Council Meeting Minutes- March 2, 2021
- d. Regular City Council Meeting Minutes- March 9, 2021

e. Special Council Meeting Minutes- March 15, 2021

5. Public Comment on Consent Agenda

None.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To APPROVE the consent Agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

7. Consideration of Additions/Deletions to Agenda

- City Manager Simmons- Forensic Audit Scheduling
- Engineer Rouchaleau- Construction Cost for Hwy 331 South Sewer Expansion-Amendments to Engineering Agreement for Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade
- Councilwoman Green- Homeless in the community

8. Approval of Agenda with Additions/Deletions

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE the Agenda with the specified additions as presented.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

9. Staff Reports

- a. Water
- b. Sewer
- c. Parks
- d. City Manager

1. NFWFMD- Brett Cyphers

City Manager Simmons opened the floor to Jennifer Green of Liberty Partners who introduced Brett Cyphers who is the Executive Director of the North West Florida Water Management District. Mr.Cyphers opened by presenting a PowerPoint which illustrated what the North West Florida Water Management District organization does, while informing the Council that the City of Freeport falls under a district containing sixteen counties. Due to the lack of representation across the district Mr.Cyphers explained that the organization helps municipalities establish connections with those who could assist in securing alternative sources of funding for projects. Mr.Cyphers gave examples of strategies and partnerships used by other counties in the district which contributed to the success of various water projects. Mr.Cyphers noted that after reviewing the applications the City of Freeport submitted for grant funding, he wanted to stress the importance of the City networking with local government to make funding initiatives successful. Mr.Cyphers applauded the City for deciding to plan ahead for the future, noting that there were several angles and strategies the City could make to secure multiple sources of funding. Mr.Cyphers opened the floor for questioning from the Council. Councilwoman Brannon thanked Mr.Cyphers for coming and noted that she looked forward to the City partnering with his organization. Councilwoman Green queried on Mr.Cyphers thoughts of the City's approach to addressing the septic to sewer dilemma, stormwater control, and another items the City may not have on its radar. Mr.Cyphers remarked that he believed that the City was headed in the right direction, noting that it was all about the timeline for development. Mr.Cyphers continued by recommending that the City engage more with DEP for loans and funding, noting that there were a plethora of financial incentives for being a small City. City Manager Simmons noted that the City was targeting a plethora of places for additional funding and thanked Mr.Cyphers for his attendance. Councilman Farris thanked Mr.Cyphers for assisting the City with moving forward.

- City Manager Simmons encouraged the Council to set a date for a public meeting to discuss the Forensic Audit from Marcum. City Manager Simmons

encouraged the Council to set the public meeting on April 22, 2021 before the Regular Council Meeting. The Council agreed to set the Forensic Audit for April 22, 2021 with the Regular Council Meeting to follow immediately after.

- City Manager Simmons informed the Council that he met with DOT and the County regarding the four-lane generic drawings. City Manager Simmons informed the Council that he was told that the project was far down the line, however they did discuss problematic traffic areas in the City. The County and City Manager Simmons gave DOT input for data and suggestions for what would work for the City.
- City Manager Simmons noted that he met with Jill Smith from the School District to discuss the entrance and exit strategies for the new middle school. Once the architect begins to work on the plans for the school, they will meet City Manager Simmons to discuss the plans.
- City Manager Simmons noted that BBC accepted the new site that was proposed for the new library.
- Councilwoman Green thanked City Manager Simmons for his work noting that the light sequencing was causing major issues with the traffic flow within the City. City Manager Simmons noted that the sequencing of the lights was a topic of discussion with DOT at their previous meeting. Councilwoman Green also expressed her concerns with the sustainability of the Blue Ridge Road and the high traffic volume, noting her uncertainty of Publix keeping it as a public access road. Planning Director Hughes-Neel informed the Council that as part of their agreement the Blue Ridge Road must remain a public access.
- City Manager Simmons informed the Council that he was in negotiation with the new dual certified Sewer Operator and hoped to bring him to the next meeting.

Moved by: Councilwoman Green

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To schedule the Public Meeting for the Forensic Audit for April 22, 2021 at 5:30 PM with the Regular Council Meeting to immediately follow.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

e. City Clerk

f. Finance

g. Billing

h. Planning

1. FDEP Green Stormwater Grant/Approval to Submit Application

Planning Director Hughes-Neel briefed the Council on the Green Stormwater Grant, noting that it was a pilot grant that could potential be used in various projects around the City. Planning Director Hughes-Neel noted that the project sought to use an eco-friendly approach to clean stormwater and that she had been working on the site plans with Engineer Knauer. Planning Director Hughes-Neel sought permission to move forward with the application for the grant. Councilwoman Green expressed her concerns regarding the additional funding of the project after reviewing the terms of the grant. Planning Director Hughes-Neel assured the Council that in case of the need to address larger problems she would use in-kind resources for the expenditures.

Moved by: Councilman Farris

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To move forward with the application for the grant.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

2. Planning Updates

- Due to new builds along the Choctawhatchee Bay, Planning Director Hughes-Neel will be making updates to the Comprehensive Plans for the City by adding new policies. Planning Director Hughes-Neel informed the Council that there were available grant funds for coastal resilience that included policies for the Comprehensive Plans for the City. Planning Director Hughes Neel noted that by working with the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition to secure grants the City would be given the opportunity to tackle items such as education for converting from septic to sewer and Bay clean-up.
- The City Planner and Planning Tech are cross training to perform all duties within the Planning Department.
- The Planning Department has received nine new development projects this week and will continue to update the Council with updates via email. Planning Director Hughes-Neel expressed that the Council could contact her anytime for questioning.

i. Legal

j. Engineering

1. West Bay Loop Sewer Improvements Project- Approval To Bid

Engineer Rouchaleau sought approval to bid the West Bay Loop Sewer Improvements Project, which includes upgrades to existing lift stations.

Engineer Rouchaleau presented a handout to Council which outlined the cost estimate for the U.S 331 North Sewer Improvements. Based on projections of development along 331 Engineer Rouchaleau felt that it would be in the City's best interest to upsize to get ahead of the development curve up to a ten-year projection. The revised designed was a million dollars over budget, however Engineer Rouchaleau noted that the water, impact, and sewage fees could cover the expense. Councilman Martin noted that he was impressed with the Engineers Rouchaleau's plan to stay ahead of development, rather than waiting for developments to appear.

Engineer Rouchaleau presented an amendment to the engineering agreement to include an extension of the project timeline due to the upgrades and included the breakdown of the expenditures . Engineer Rouchaleau noted that he was actively working with USDA to get the application finalized for the \$29 million request. Engineer Rouchaleau requested approval to amend the agreement. Councilwoman Brannon queried on whether the 2% in legal fees included the bond. City Attorney Adkinson clarified that the 2% was the total dollar amount that included the bond fees.

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

To APPROVE the project for bidding.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

Moved by: Councilman Farris
Seconded by: Councilman Martin

To APPROVE moving forward with the revised design.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

Moved by: Councilman Martin
Seconded by: Councilman Farris

To APPROVE the amended engineering agreement.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

Carried

10. Old Business

11. New Business

- a. Mayor Russ Barley
- b. Councilwoman Brannon
- c. Councilman Farris
- d. Councilwoman Green

Councilwoman Green noted that with the growth of the community she has noted that the epidemic of homelessness has been growing throughout the City. Councilwoman Green remarked that although it may not be visible, functional homelessness was present and she would like to take the initiative to research homelessness in the area. Councilwoman Green sought permission from the Council to work alongside Lieutenant Pendleton and City Manager Simmons to address this matter.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

To APPROVE Councilwoman Green to research and work on the homelessness crisis in the City.

A roll call vote was ordered, and the vote was as follows:

Councilman Farris: aye

Councilman Martin: aye

Councilwoman Haffner: aye

Councilwoman Brannon: aye

Councilwoman Green: aye

- e. Councilwoman Haffner
- f. Councilman McCormick

12. Public Comment

Mayor Barley reminded the Council that they had been invited to attend the Opening Day of the Little League Games for recognition, and that on April 3 the EGGSTRAVAGANZA and Spring Festival will be taking place. Councilwoman Green noted that DOT would be having a public meeting on April 20, 2021 6PM at the Heritage Church to discuss the Highway 20 expansion.

13. Adjournment

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barley", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mayor

ATTEST:

A faint, circular official stamp, likely from the City Clerk's office, located above the signature.
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Haffner", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

City Clerk